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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education including vocational training for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 52/60 of 10 December 1997.

2. The report includes the substance of responses from Member States, non-member States and United Nations agencies to the appeal contained in that resolution, together with reference to further action taken by Member States and United Nations agencies in response to the appeal contained in General Assembly resolutions 32/90 F of 13 December 1977, 33/112 C of 18 December 1978, 34/52 C of 23 November 1979, 35/13 B of 3 November 1980, 36/146 H of 16 December 1981, 37/120 D of 16 December 1982, 38/83 D of 15 December 1983, 39/99 D of 14 December 1984, 40/165 D of 16 December 1985, 41/69 D of 3 December 1986, 42/69 D of 2 December 1987, 43/57 D of 6 December 1988, 44/47 D of 8 December 1989, 45/73 D of 11 December 1990, 46/46 D of 9 December 1991, 47/69 D of 14 December 1992, 48/40 D of 10 December 1993, 49/35 D of 9 December 1994, 50/28 D of 6 December 1995 and 51/127 of 13 December 1996. By these resolutions the Assembly appealed to all States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to augment special allocations for grants and scholarships to Palestine refugees; invited the relevant specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system to continue, within their respective spheres of competence, to extend assistance for higher education to Palestine refugee students, and requested the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to act as the recipient and trustee for such special allocations for grants and scholarships, and to award them to qualified refugee candidates.

3. In 1997–1998, the Government of Japan awarded 11 fellowships through UNRWA to Palestine refugees. Of these fellowships, three were to vocational training staff employed by UNRWA at the eight vocational training centres in UNRWA's area of operation, two were fellowships in vocational training administration, while the other six were fellowships in community health. All of the fellowships were for training in Japan and were processed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Since its inception in 1985, this programme has offered a total of 154 fellowships, of which 143 have been processed. In 1989, the Government of Japan contributed $1 million to the UNRWA university scholarship programme for secondary school graduates. The scholarships funded by this contribution, which was to be spent over a five-year period, went to 162 Palestine refugee students from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Of these students, 130 graduated between 1993 and 1997, while 32 of the recipients were still pursuing their studies in the 1997/1998 academic year. The Government

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of Japan also contributed to the same scholarship programme an additional amount of $400,000 in each of the years 1992, 1993 and 1994, $500,000 in 1995 and $600,000 in each of the years 1996 and 1997, to be spent over a five-year period. Of the students funded by these contributions, 494 were still pursuing their studies in the 1997/1998 academic year, while 77 graduated between 1995 and 1997. These awards, while not specifically in response to the General Assembly resolutions, are keeping with their spirit.

4. The Government of Switzerland contributed $1,703,581 between 1989 and 1996 to the UNRWA university scholarships programme for secondary school graduates, and contributed an additional $338,000 to the programme in 1997. The major part of the 1997 contribution was used to cover the 1997/1998 awards for 315 students whose scholarships were hitherto funded by the UNRWA General Fund and were frozen for 1997/1998 due to the financial problems UNRWA faced. The balance of the contribution was used to grant 19 new scholarships, while one additional scholarship was funded by savings resulting from students who did not complete the programme and early graduations of scholars in the previous year. This brings the number of scholars funded by the Government of Switzerland's contribution to the UNRWA programme to 214 students who were still pursuing their studies in the 1997/1998 academic year, and 147 scholars who graduated between 1993 and 1997.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as part of its long-standing agreement with UNRWA, granted seven scholarships in favour of Palestinian students during the 1997/1998 biennium. Of these scholarships, two were awarded from funds of the preceding year, one scholarship was awarded under UNESCO/Italy Funds-In-Trust, and four scholarships were granted within the framework of a UNESCO project funded by the European Commission with a view to promoting a network for exchange of information in the field of preventive education against drug abuse.

6. In 1997/1998 the World Health Organization provided a total of 50 fellowships/study tours for qualified Palestinian candidates nominated by the Palestinian Authority. These fellowships/study tours have been for various specializations and of a commutative total of 75 months study. Out of these 50 scholarships, 48 were processed, while two scholars could not travel because they were refused the requisite visas by the countries of destination.

7. The United World Colleges (UWC) have meanwhile established their own selection committee in UNRWA's area of operation, and have therefore not offered any scholarships through UNRWA for the 1997/1998 academic year. One scholarship, however, has been offered through UNRWA for 1998/1999 by Lester B. Pearson, UWC of the Pacific, Canada, and is currently being processed.